

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claim 2 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein.

Please amend Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, and 11-13 and add new Claims 14-25 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus, comprising:

sheet stacking means for stacking sheets;

sheet processing means for processing the sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means;

a sheet holding portion which stores plural supplied sheets with upstream edges in a conveying direction thereof aligned; while preceding sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means are processed by the sheet processing means; and

sheet stacking means for stacking the sheets discharged from the sheet holding portion;

and

sheet conveying means for conveying the sheets stored in the sheet holding portion discharged to the sheet stacking means, bringing the upstream edges of the sheets into abutment against a receiving stopper for receiving the upstream edges to align the upstream edges, and discharging the sheets from the sheet stacking means;

wherein the supplied sheets are held in the sheet holding portion with edges in a conveying direction thereof aligned until the last sheet of the sheets to be stored is supplied in the sheet holding portion, and

wherein the plural supplied stored sheets are discharged to the sheet stacking means from the sheet holding portion by the sheet conveying means when a downstream edge in [[a]] the

conveying direction of a sheet to be supplied last has preceded the downstream edges in the conveying direction of the sheets ~~stored held~~ in the sheet holding portion by a predetermined amount.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus according to ~~claim 2~~ claim 1, further comprising control means for controlling the number of sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the sheet processing means.

4. (Currently Amended) An sheet processing apparatus according to ~~claim 2~~ claim 1, further comprising control means for performing:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action including subjecting [[a]] the preceding sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means to processing with the sheet processing means and simultaneously causing [[a]] the subsequent sheet sheets to be stored held in the sheet holding portion and, after the processing of the preceding sheet ends, conveying the subsequent sheet and the preceding sheet together using the sheet conveying means to discharge the preceding sheet from the sheet stacking means, and then stacking the subsequent sheet on the sheet stacking means; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action including not causing the specific sheet to be stored held in the sheet holding portion but, after the discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet

holding portion to be stacked on the sheet stacking means, processing the sheet with the sheet processing means, and then discharging the sheet from the sheet stacking means with the sheet conveying means.

5. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the specific sheet is at least one selected from the group consisting of a sheet with a length equal to or larger than a predetermined length, a sheet for an overhead projector, a color printed sheet, a sheet designated as a top cover, a sheet designated as thick paper, a sheet designated as thin paper, and a sheet with a tab.

6. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus according to ~~claim 2~~ claim 1, wherein the sheet processing means is a stapler for stitching a sheet stack.

7. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet conveying means comprises a first rotary member and a second rotary member which rotate in contact with the sheets stacked on the sheet stacking means from both sides of the sheets.

8. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the sheet holding portion holds the supplied sheets linearly.

9. (Currently Amended) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 1,  
wherein the sheet ~~holding portion~~ stacking means comprises: moving means for moving  
the supplied sheets to an upstream side; and an abutment stopper against which the upstream  
edges of the sheets moved by the moving means are brought into abutment.

10. (Original) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 3 or 4,  
wherein the sheet processing means is a stapler for stitching a sheet stack, and the control  
means increases the number of sheets, which are stored in the sheet holding means, in proportion  
to positions to be stitched by the stapler.

11. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming which forms an image on a sheet; and  
a sheet processing apparatus which applies processing to the sheet on which the image is  
formed by the image forming means,  
wherein the sheet processing apparatus is a sheet processing apparatus according to any  
one of ~~claims 1 to 9~~ claims 1, and 3 to 9.

12. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming which forms an image on a sheet;  
the sheet processing apparatus according to ~~claim 2~~ claim 1 which applies processing to  
the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and

control means for controlling the number of the sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the sheet processing means.

13. (Currently Amended) An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;  
the sheet processing apparatus according to ~~claim 2~~ claim 1 which applies processing to  
the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and  
control means for performing:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action  
including subjecting [[a]] ~~the preceding sheets~~ sheet stacked on the sheet stacking means to  
processing with the sheet processing means and simultaneously causing [[a]] ~~the subsequent~~  
sheets ~~sheet~~ to be held in the sheet holding portion and, after the processing of the preceding  
sheets ends, conveying the subsequent sheet and the preceding ~~sheets~~ sheet together using the  
sheet conveying means to discharge the preceding sheet from the sheet stacking means, and then  
stacking the subsequent sheet on the sheet stacking means; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action  
including not causing the specific sheet to be held in the sheet holding portion but causing the  
specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding portion to be stacked on the sheet stacking  
means, processing the sheet with the sheet processing means, and then discharging the sheet from  
the sheet stacking means with the sheet conveying means.

14. (New) A sheet processing apparatus, comprising:

a processing tray on which sheets are stacked;

a processing unit which applies processing to the sheets stacked on the processing tray;

a sheet holding portion which stores supplied sheets while preceding sheets stacked on the processing tray are processed by the processing unit; and

sheet discharging rotary member which discharges the sheets stored in the sheet holding portion to the processing tray,

wherein the supplied sheets are held in the sheet holding portion with edges in a discharging direction thereof aligned until the last sheet of the sheets to be stored is supplied in the sheet holding portion, and

wherein the stored sheets are discharged to the processing tray from the sheet holding portion by the sheet discharging rotary member when a downstream edge in the discharging direction of a sheet to be supplied last has preceded the downstream edges in the discharging direction of the sheets held in the sheet holding portion by a predetermined amount.

15. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a control portion which controls the number of sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the processing unit.

16. (New) An sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising a control portion which performs:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action including subjecting the preceding sheets stacked on the processing tray to processing with the processing unit and simultaneously causing the subsequent sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action including not causing the specific sheet to be stored in the sheet holding portion but, after the discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding portion to be stacked on the processing tray.

17. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the specific sheet is at least one selected from the group consisting of a sheet with a length equal to or larger than a predetermined length, a sheet for an overhead projector, a color printed sheet, a sheet designated as a top cover, a sheet designated as thick paper, a sheet designated as thin paper, and a sheet with a tab.

18. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the processing unit is a stapler which stitches a sheet stack.

19. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the sheet discharging rotary member comprises a first rotary member and a second rotary member which rotate in contact with the sheets stacked on the processing tray from both sides of the sheets.

20. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14,

wherein the sheet holding portion holds the supplied sheets linearly.

21. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14,

wherein the processing tray comprises:

a return roller which moves the supplied sheets to an upstream side; and

an abutment stopper against which the upstream edges of the sheets moved by the return roller are brought into abutment.

22. (New) A sheet processing apparatus according to claim 15 or 16,

wherein the processing unit is a stapler for stitching a sheet stack, and the control portion increases the number of sheets, which are stored in the sheet holding portion, in proportion to positions to be stitched by the stapler.

23. (New) An image forming apparatus, comprising:

image forming means for forming an image on a sheet; and

a sheet processing apparatus which processes the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means,

wherein the sheet processing apparatus is a sheet processing apparatus according to any one of claims 14 to 22.

24. (New) An image forming apparatus, comprising:

image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;

the sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 which processes the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and

a control portion which controls the number of the sheets to be stored in the sheet holding portion according to a processing time of the processing unit.

25. (New) An image forming apparatus, comprising:

image forming means for forming an image on a sheet;

the sheet processing apparatus according to claim 14 which processes the sheet on which the image is formed by the image forming means; and

a control portion which performs:

a first action in a case in which the sheet is an ordinary sheet, the first action including subjecting the preceding sheets stacked on the processing tray to stitch processing with the processing unit and simultaneously causing the subsequent sheets to be held in the sheet holding portion; and

a second action in a case in which the sheet is a specific sheet, the second action including not causing the specific sheet to be held in the sheet holding portion but, after the discharging of the preceding sheets, causing the specific sheet to pass through the sheet holding portion to be stacked on the processing tray.